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SOVIET-FINNISH TELEVISION RELATIONS

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SOVIET-FINNISH TELEVISION RELATIONS

Soviet plans to propagandize Finland through the medium of television received a serious set-back when the Finnish Radio Corporation (FRC) recently purchased a television transmitter from the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). 1/ Finnish television will be compatible with Western European rather than USSR standards of transmission. The sale, however, may provide impetus for increased efforts by Moscow to export television receivers to Finland.* Soviet TV sets shipped to Finland would be capable of receiving programs both from Finnish and USSR television stations. 2/ Moscow is operating a television station in Tallin, the signals of which reach the Helsinki area. A new station, to be set up at Petrozavodsk, will increase the Communist TV coverage of Finland. 3/

Formal and informal pressures on Finland to adopt Soviet TV standards have been made since the Finnish 1955 budget allocated funds to study TV prospects for the country. 4/ These pressures took the form of attempting to get Soviet television receivers into the hands of Finnish citizens to establish a viewing base for Soviet television programs. Moscow hoped that these set owners would pressure the Finnish government to adopt USSR television transmission standards.

Helsinki, however, resisted these pressures and restricted imports of Soviet TV sets. Soviet TV sets originally offered for sale in Finland were refused license on the grounds that they did not meet Finnish safety standards. Helsinki also insisted that USSR sets be capable of receiving Western standard television transmissions as well as Soviet standard transmissions. 5/ Up to January 1956, only 22 USSR television sets were sold in Finland, and these were mainly sample sets. 6/

Meanwhile, the FRC sent its technicians to England, France, West Germany, the USSR, and the US to shop for television transmission and studio equipment. 7/ The FRC purchased a transmitter from RCA, planned for experimental operation this fall. 8/

While the FRC was looking for television equipment, the USSR re-designed its TV sets offered for sale to Finland to meet Finnish safety standards, and developed television receivers capable of receiving both Western and Soviet standard television transmissions. At the same time, it was reported that Finnish television sets planned for production in the near future were also of a dual-reception character. 9/

It was announced in the Finnish press on 6 January 1956 that the importation of 1,250 television receivers had been authorized by the Finnish government, 10/ of which 650 were to be Temp and Avant Garde sets from the USSR.

* State Department despatches concerning the purchase of this RCA transmitter do not give the technical specifications of its operation but it is implied from the language used that the transmitter will operate on Western rather than USSR transmission standards.

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Finland has apparently adopted a television standard compatible with the general European standard. This would allow the future connection of Finnish television with Eurovision, possibly through linking the planned Finnish television network with the Swedish television system now being developed and planned for eventual connection with Eurovision. 11/ However, permission to import television sets from the USSR and reports that Finnish television sets will be for dual-reception use indicate that Finland is willing to allow at least limited Soviet television reception in Finland.

A 50 percent landed FOB import tax reportedly will be levied by the Finnish government on all foreign television sets. 12/ The tariff's main purpose appears to be the establishment of a cushion of protection for the "infant" television industry in Finland. By pricing their sets attractively, the USSR can still hope to attract customers in Finland for their TV sets, and keep alive their desire to have an audience in Finland for Soviet propaganda through television.

Analysts:

Coord:

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2. State, Helsinki, desp 291, 15 Dec 55, Joint State-USIS Message, Section Two of Two, S
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3. Army, Helsinki, NR: 9/NFT, Joint Weeka 6, 17 Feb 56, Finnish TV Developments, C
Air, IR-2083-55, 2 Aug 55, New Television Station in Tallin, info 26 Jul 55, C
4. State, Helsinki, desp 248, 29 Nov 55, Television in Finland, p 1, S
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5. Army, Helsinki, IN-194517, 18 Jan 56, Import of Television Receivers Authorized, C
6. State, Helsinki, desp 248, op. cit.
7. State, Helsinki, desp 248, op. cit.
8. State, Helsinki, desp 291, op. cit.
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11. State, Helsinki, desp 322, 10 Jan 56, Joint State-USIS Message, S
12. State, Stockholm, desp 556, 7 Dec 55, Swedish Television, S
13. Army, Helsinki, NR: 16/NFT, Joint Weeka 7, 23 Feb 56, Finnish Television Developments, C

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